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## The Poetics of Camp in the Films of Alfred Hitchcock

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“I admit it’s terribly hard to define. You have to meditate on it and feel it intuitively, like Laotse’s *Tao*. Once you’ve done that, you’ll find yourself wanting to use the word whenever you discuss aesthetics or philosophy or almost anything. I never can understand how critics manage to do without it.”

Charles Kennedy “on camp,” to Stephen Monk  
—Christopher Isherwood,  
*The World in the Evening* (106)

“Every student of camp must contend with its indefinability, its elusiveness, and its changeability.”

—David Bergman, “Camp” (130)

Possibly the biggest stumbling block to overcome when theorizing camp is arriving at a working definition. Like the term “queer,” “camp” is a word that has been used by a multiplicity of critics to mean a multiplicity of things. It could be said that Kennedy was quite right about the usefulness of the word “camp,” and that once the post-modern-post-structuralist critics got hold of it, they have not managed without it, regardless of the appropriateness (or appropriatedness) of the term. The most famous example of this is Susan Sontag’s “Notes on Camp” in which she defines camp in an attempt to describe the 1960 avant garde New York art scene. The clear sign of Sontag’s bastardization of the term is that homosexuality does not appear until note #50, and then it is mentioned in a way that implies that the queerness of camp is incidental to the camp itself.

Esther Newton, in her pioneering ethnographic study of female impersonators, *Mother Camp*, is more specific about the boundaries of camp: “Camp is not a thing. Most broadly, it signifies a relationship between things, people and activi-

ties or qualities and homosexuality” (105). It is this relationship of camp to homosexuality, or non-heterosexual “queerness,” which is most important to Hitchcockian camp. However, a complication of this is that “People who have camp screen personalities or are in some way responsible for camp, need not be gay” (Babuscio 20). In other words, Hitchcock’s use of a star such as Dietrich and creation of a star such as Hedren may inscribe camp into his films regardless of the actual sexual orientation of Hitchcock, Dietrich, or Hedren.

“Queer” is in many ways a more difficult term to pin down than camp, although for obvious reasons it is more integrally associated with homosexuality. In an edition of *Critical Quarterly* specifically dedicated to queer theory, there are several movements toward a working definition. Most obviously, to be “queer” is to be homosexual. Historically, the term is a derogatory statement about a homosexual of either gender. But Simon Watney claims that “‘queer’ asserts an identity that celebrates differences within a wider picture of sexual and social diversity” (15). Watney frees “queer” from associations that other words used to describe a non-heterosexual milieu may carry with them, such as “gay,” which for many people connotes white, male, urban, well-to-do homosexuals (15). To think of “queer” in wider terms makes it more appropriate for application to the entirety of Hitchcock’s work, as the term allows for “the widest application of the word.... it means something odd, it means something rather disturbing, it means something just not right. That’s very interesting to play around with” (Savage and Julien 2).

Hitchcock found queerness in its widest application “interesting to play around with.” Through this play, Hitchcock discovered that “camp has the ability to ‘queer’ straight culture by asserting that there is queerness at the core of mainstream culture even though that culture tirelessly insists that its images, ideologies and readings were always about heterosexuality” (Creekmur 3). Through his films, Hitchcock widens the subversive nature of camp to allow for more than just the categorizing of his hidden desires along the axes of homosexual and heterosexual. Babuscio suggests that

In film, the aesthetic element in camp further implies a movement away from contemporary concerns into realms of exotic or subjective fantasies; the depiction of states of mind that are (in terms of commonly accepted taboos and standards) suspect; an emphasis on sensuous surfaces, textures, imagery, and the evocation of mood as stylistic devices — not simply because they are appropriate to the plot, but as fascinating in themselves. (22)

Inscribing camp into his narratives was Hitchcock’s way of inverting societal norms and exposing an underside of human desires in films that were celebrated by the dominant culture. The result is a hidden poetics of camp through which Hitch’s

(and therefore the audience's) queerness is expressed. This poetics operates discursively as a type of "palimpsest" — or, in Virginia Woolf's conception of poetry, a "secret transaction" which occurs behind the overt narratives of his films. Since many of the emotions and character motivations that operate at sub-narrative levels in Hitchcock are socially unacceptable due to their queerness, it is camp humor that allows for their inscription. About his use of the comic, Hitchcock said, "I try to keep the whole film on a human level, with emotions mixed in the incongruous way they are in real life. I shall always attempt to portray the real psychology of my characters — the women as well as the men" ("Women" 81). Thus, camp humor operates as a system through which Hitchcock points to the "paradoxical relationship between performance and message" (Bergman, "Camp" 131). This is a key element of camp's performativity; "it does not celebrate the natural, but the artificial," and it "has to be performative, even when the performer is unaware of how campy the performance is" (132). One of the main loci of this poetics of camp is the star persona of the actors Hitchcock uses — Cary Grant, Grace Kelly, Joan Fontaine, Marlene Dietrich, and 'Tippi' Hedren.

Determining a way in which a homosexual or queer subtext is consistently written into Hitchcock's work is problematic. Theodore Price, in *Hitchcock and Homosexuality*, suggests some "formal benchmarks" by which Hitchcock's work can be considered to have homosexual elements inscribed in it. They are:

1. A known homosexual has written the story on which the film is based.
2. Known, real-life homosexuals have prominent acting roles in the film.
3. There are obvious homosexual sequences, situations, or characters in the film that anyone can recognize once one stops to think about them.
4. There are not-so-obvious homosexual sequences, situations, or characters that may be missed by "straight" viewers but that seem immediately obvious to gay viewers.
5. There are male characters in the storyline who have a pathological hatred for women (or female characters who have a pathological hatred for men — who can't stand the touch of them).
6. In the love scenes, the men are passive: the women take the more active role.
7. There are pointed anti-marriage jokes or situations.
8. Grown men suddenly faint, a situation that can (or should) in a Hitchcock film be interpreted as a feminine attribute, or indicative in some way of sexual anxiety.
9. There are transvestites: men in drag, or women who look like men in drag.

10. There are “bondage” scenes, which often represent a sadomasochistic, master/slave relationship, common to some homosexual relationships. (Price 42-43)

Naturally, a blanket application of these “formal benchmarks” is not advisable, as it would oversimplify the complex psychological motivations at play behind many Hitchcock films. However, when considered in light of Richard Dyer’s essay “Stereotyping,” these indicators of homosexual subtext help expose the presence of camp in Hitchcock’s works. Dyer states that “films use a certain set of visual and aural signs which immediately bespeak homosexuality and connote the qualities associated, stereotypically, with it” (31). Newton, in theorizing drag, expands upon the connotative power of these signs: “Even one feminine item ruins the integrity of the masculine system: the male loses his caste honor” (101). Therefore, merely one formal signifier of homosexuality would connote queer desires and allow for an investigation into the presence or operation of camp. In this case, to the list above I would add Dyer’s contribution of “over-concern with appearance, association with a ‘good taste’ that is just shading into decadence . . . grotesque make-up and obvious wigs, body-building, or sickliness of features, connoting not only depravity and mental illness, but also the primped, unexposed face of the indoors (non-active, non sporting) man” (32).

Newton writes: “Three themes are present in any campy thing or event — all three are intimately related to the homosexual situation and strategy: incongruity is the subject matter of camp, theatricality is its style, and humor is the strategy” (106).<sup>1</sup> Incongruity can be intentional or unintentional: “The homosexual creates the camp by pointing out the incongruity or devising it. Intentional camp would work with juxtapositions of masculine-feminine, high and low status, youth and old age, profane and sacred functions or symbols, or cheap and expensive articles, for example” (106). Examples of such intentional camping can be found throughout Hitchcock: the flower pot framed over Ivor Novello’s head in *The Lodger*; the “date” between Erica and the old drunkard as they search for the man with the twitching eyes in *Young and Innocent*. In the case of unintentional camp, “camp inheres not in the person or thing, but in the tension between that person or thing and the context or association” (107). An example of this would be the use of a queer actor whose star persona is based upon a hyperbolized display of heterosexuality (Marlene Dietrich, Ivor Novello, and in some ways Anthony Perkins). Another example would be an actor with a hero star persona who is cast in what could be construed as a villainous role: Cary Grant in *To Catch A Thief* or Ingrid Bergman in *Notorious*, for example.

Camp’s theatricality directly pertains to role deviation and role manipulation, either on or off stage. It can be broken down into three areas of consideration:

camp as style, camp's dramatic form, and "life as theatre" (107-8). The element of camp that can be called "life as theatre" is bounded and specific. It pertains directly to the type of life that must be lived theatrically because an element of the person or character's desire is subversive, or "dangerous" to the world order, and must thus be hidden. Homosexuality would fall into this category, as would love or lust for a married woman (*Under Capricorn*), aberrant heterosexual desires (*Frenzy*), or unnatural attachment to a parent or parent figure (*Marnie*, *Psycho*).

Artifice is highly important to this theatre. An over-compensation for the deviance results in a hyperbolized performance of gender and an excess of heterosexual desire. Content (both explicit and implicit) is subverted to style in which the queer desires are hidden. The inversion that occurs here "places aesthetic concerns above ethical concerns" (132) so that what is performed or presented theatrically is more important than the actual content or message (or subtext) of the performance. Camp's style moves the concerns of analysis "from what a thing is to how it looks, from what is done to how it is done. Campy incongruities are often created by adornment or stylization of a well-defined thing or symbol" (107). Examples of such incongruities include the overly-stylized tiepin of *Frenzy* and the on and offscreen dressing of 'Tippi' Hedren by Edith Head, with coiffure by Alexandre of Paris. Hitchcock was aware of the power that style carries with it. In "On Style," Hitch states: "I put first and foremost cinematic style before content. Most people, reviewers, you know, they review pictures purely in terms of content. I don't care what the film is about. I don't even know who was in the airplane attacking Cary Grant. I don't care. So long as that audience goes through that emotion! Content is quite secondary to me" (292). Therefore, as long as the audience also feels the shadow of the forbidden — the queer desire — through the stylized camping, Hitchcock has attained his goal.

Lastly in this consideration of camp's attributes is that of "humor as its strategy." Here, we need to split hairs with respect to humor and comedy. First, camp as a humor system is subversive by its nature. Humor need not be supportive or generative of riotous laughter or comedy. While humor has become linked with comedy and laughter in the late 20th century, here we must invoke it in the spirit of its medieval definition (when it was still considered a physiological fluid): "a peculiar disposition that led to a person's readily perceiving the ridiculous, the ludicrous" (Holman 256). By the 18th century, this definition had expanded to: "a comical mode that was sympathetic, tolerant, and warmly aware of the depths of human nature" (Holman 256). This view of humor allows it to be defined as a trope through which the inexpressible and queer elements of human nature are allowed expression. Since camp may be unintentional and lie "in the eye of the

beholder,” the presence of camp elements in Hitchcock’s work exposes and interrogates the “depths of human nature” and the queer subtexts which lie there.

In the Classical Hollywood narrative, the actor plays a role that is carefully constructed to support or reenforce the values of the dominant culture. However, when that actor is a “star,” the resonances and characteristics of the off-screen construction spill over into the on-screen portrayal of character. Thus, the actor is in a unique position, since his/her own personal attributes are occluded by the persona which can take the place of, or completely contradict, the inherent characteristics of the individual. These characteristics may be related to marital status, intelligence, physical prowess, or sexual orientation. Hitchcock seems extremely aware of the power of the star persona, as well as his power to manipulate it or, in Hedren’s case, create it. The use of the persona in this way hints at perversity and inscribes levels of ambiguity across which this perversity is signaled. Hitchcock was particularly aware of stars as well as the importance of invoking and altering the personas that the public had come to expect:

If I were directing Claudette Colbert (whom I consider one of the loveliest women in American films) I should first show her as a mannequin. She would slink through the showroom in her elegant, French way, wearing gorgeous gowns as only such a woman can. She would be perfectly coiffured, perfectly made-up. Then I should show her backstage. As she disappeared through the curtains, I’d make her suck down a piece of toffee or chewing gum which she had kept in her mouth all the time she was looking so beautiful — you see what I mean? That touch of realism would make her infinitely more human. (“Women” 80)

This touch of realism would also expose an underside to the glamour and an inversion of it. Since, as Newton writes, “incongruous juxtapositions can be intentional or unintentional — the homosexual [locus of queer desires] creates the camp by pointing out the incongruity or devising it” (106). This incongruous juxtaposition allows for the camp and the expression of queerness.

Babuscio states, “As a practical tendency in things or persons, camp emphasizes style as a means of self-projection, a conveyor of meaning, and an expression of emotional tone. Style is a form of consciousness; it is never ‘natural,’ always acquired. Camp is also urban; it is, in part, a reaction to the anonymity, boredom, and socializing tendencies of technological society” (23). Hitchcock’s camping is a reaction to the technological society around him, but also to the controlling nature of a film industry which demands a marketable product and prevents the exploration of the darkest or most unsavory of human behavior or impulses. By directly drawing upon those motivations that the Hays Code would most like to hide and ignore, Hitchcock queers the “dominant cinema.” Babuscio also writes

that the importance of camp in Von Sternberg's films is "the perception of an underlying emotional autobiography — a disguise of self and obsessions by means of the artificial" (31). This same action is operative in Hitchcock's films, particularly in those starring 'Tippi' Hedren in which Hitchcock's obsession with the actress offscreen is played out onscreen by the stylized exploitation of the characters she plays.

Camp's dramatic form "always involves a performer and an audience" (Newton 108). Therefore, *Stage Fright*, a film which interrogates the relationship between life and theatre through role-playing and the invocation of a star persona (Dietrich) is a good film from which to start discussing the camp poetics of Hitchcock.

Donald Spoto writes that *Stage Fright* is "a wonderfully realized comic treatment on the nature of role-playing in real life" (315). From the first raising of the safety curtain "the distinctions between theatrical life and street life (and, in what follows, between art and life itself) begin to blur. As the story unfolds, everyone assumes false identities, everyone plays a role. Appearances slip and slide and nothing is certain in a world marked by costumes and matinees and benefit garden parties and the lies of false friends" (315). Within this theatrical framework, Hitchcock is free to play with the incongruities created by the persona of his star, Dietrich, in a way that is accepted, and indeed celebrated by audience and director alike. Of Dietrich, Hitchcock said, "Marlene was a professional star— she was also a professional cameraman, art director, editor, costume designer, hairdresser, makeup woman, composer, producer, and director" (qtd. in Spoto 316). This level of control over one's illusion and effect can come only from an understanding and exploitation of the elements of theatricality and, in Dietrich's case, an understanding of the incongruities of her onscreen and offscreen personas. Dietrich's hyperbolized performance of gender can acceptably exist only in the theatre — or life lived as theatre.

Marlene Dietrich is an undeniably campy figure. Onscreen, she was a femme fatale who performed a hyperbolized femininity. Offscreen, she did exactly what the covert homosexual must do: live the theatricality of camp every moment of every day. This theatricality recasts all of life as a theatrical event — the same approach that Charlotte Inwood takes within the world of the film. Not only does Inwood act onstage, she must also act offstage, to manipulate Johnny into killing her husband, and to fool the police into thinking she has had nothing to do with the murder.

Dietrich, as a covert queer, had to treat her life as a theatrical act: hiding the stigma of non-heterosexual desires and "pass[ing] to the world at large as a respect-

able citizen” (Dyer 108). As a homosexual she must always be on guard not only to “conceal the fact that he [she] sleeps with men [women]; [but] to control the ‘halo effect’ or signals that would announce that he [she] sleeps with men [women]” (Dyer 108). Therefore, Dietrich must herself become a female impersonator — to appear to be straight to the straight world. This translates into two levels of performance in *Stage Fright* — Inwood’s hyperbolized feminine glamor and Dietrich’s hyperbolized feminine portrayal of Inwood. The conflation of Dietrich’s persona and character can be seen in her performance of “The Laziest Gal in Town.” This sequence, inspired by Dietrich’s fame as a cabaret performer, brings Dietrich’s offscreen life into Inwood’s narrative. Following *Stage Fright*, “The Laziest Gal in Town” became a signature song for Dietrich (Bach 339). The incongruities that inhere in the blurring of boundary between star and character, impersonator and impersonation result in a covert campiness that underlies the entire narrative of the film. This can be seen throughout Dietrich’s portrayal of Inwood; “Marlene Dietrich, always on stage, is the consummate actress. At the center of an amorous triangle, she is the Nordic counterpart to Anna Magnani, a woman too magnificent to be contained in a world made to human scale. Her evil is not malicious but an accident of birth, an excess femininity with which only the grandiosity of the theater is commensurate” (Haskell 50). This excess femininity supports the envisioning of life as theatre, both on and off the stage and screen. Inwood, while constantly playing a role, “is aware of a limit on the roles she can play. Living in the rarefied atmosphere of self-absorption, she cannot breathe the vulgar, vital air of human exchanges, as when she begs Jane Wyman not to burden her with confidences. She knows the extent to which she cannot respond to another human being” (Haskell 50). This self-knowledge is an acknowledgment of the incongruity of the constructed camp persona, and the queer-ness hidden within.

The question might be posed as to whether Dietrich would have been acknowledged as a camp figure at the time of the filming and release of *Stage Fright*. In Isherwood’s novel, *The World in the Evening*, originally published in 1954, Charles Kennedy uses Dietrich as a keystone of his description of camp: “You thought it [camp] meant a swishy little boy with peroxidized hair, dressed in a picture hat and a feather boa, pretending to be Marlene Dietrich? Yes, in queer circles, they call that camping. It’s all very well in its place, but it’s an utterly debased form” (106). This “debased” form of camp, according to Kennedy is “Low Camp.” Kennedy’s fascination is for High Camp, which he cites as: “always [having] an underlying seriousness. You can’t camp about something you don’t take seriously. You’re not making fun of it, you’re making fun out of it. You’re expressing what’s basically



serious to you in terms of fun and artifice and elegance” (106). Indeed, what could be more High Camp than Dietrich playing Dietrich playing Inwood? Or, of Hitchcock constructing a star to replace the one he has lost?

Nowhere is Hitchcock’s manipulation of the star persona to his own (perverse) ends more clear than in the case of ‘Tippi’ Hedren. After seeing her in a dietary milk commercial, Hitchcock summoned her to his offices, screen tested her, and set about constructing a star persona for her. The ‘Tippi’ Hedren star persona is an example of the type of conflation between life and art which has helped define and codify “camp.” Hitchcock’s obsession with ‘Tippi’ Hedren offscreen extends into his direction of her performances onscreen. The ‘Tippi’ Hedren period of Hitchcock is also the time during which his “queer desires” are most in danger of exploding onto the screen. Hitchcock, in discussing *The Birds* in a 1964 issue of *Look* [in which the cover story touts Tippi (no quotes) Hedren as “Hitchcock’s New Grace Kelly”] states: “I took on two almost impossibly difficult tasks at once — a picture in which I had to train birds and a new girl” (“Tippi” 56). According to the article, this new girl “represents a Grace Kelly blond-goddess type for which he betrays a professional fondness. Except in their glossy exteriors, the women are dissimilar, he says. ‘Grace is an easy-going, elegant woman, who moves with a benign dignity. Tippi has a faster tempo, city glibness, more humor’” (56).

Offscreen, Hitchcock’s obsession with Hedren is described as deepening almost episodically by Donald Spoto: “Hitchcock decreed, in every connection with Alfred Hitchcock and his films, the name was to appear enclosed in single quotation marks: ‘Tippi’ Hedren. It was the first gentle move of proprietorship” (456). During the filming of *The Birds*: “He started to take her aside for longer story conferences about the film, which made her increasingly uncomfortable. On and off the set, he was always staring at her, as she and others vividly recalled” (456). Hedren broke a twenty-year silence in speaking about this period with Spoto after Hitchcock’s death: “‘He could be two different men,’ Hedren said of the last difficult weeks of shooting *The Birds*. ‘He was a meticulous and sensitive director who gave so much to each scene and who got so much emotion into it — and he was a man who would do anything to get a reaction from me’” (Spoto 457). The attic scene in *The Birds* during which Melanie Daniels is attacked repeatedly by birds was shot over the span of a week during which Hedren was forced first to fight off the birds in a cage, and then to have birds tied to elastics attached to her costume so that they could not get away as she frantically swatted at them; all this exhibits a cruelty and sadism on the part of Hitchcock. To make the artificial attack seem real to the audience, he had to place his star in a true position of danger. Yet in this process, the attack became real, the artifice and the real were conflated,

and a type of revenge for her refusal of his advances was enacted. When the film was closed for a week while Hedren recuperated from a breakdown she had on the final day of filming, Hitchcock was quoted as repeatedly paraphrasing Oscar Wilde: "You destroy the thing you love" (460).

In both *The Birds* and *Marnie*, Hitchcock queers the object of the desire of the character played by Hedren. In *The Birds*, Melanie Daniels is ostensibly interested in Mitch, but subtle (and not so subtle) hints belie her real desire. When Annie Hayworth (Suzanne Pleshette) tells Melanie of her own failed romance with Mitch, she describes Lydia's (Mitch's mother) motivations, and makes a careful point to emphasize that "with all due respect to Oedipus," Lydia is afraid of being alone, not of Mitch loving another girl. Melanie responds not to Mitch's possible motivations in allowing his mother such control, but to Lydia's fear of abandonment: "Doesn't she know she'd be gaining a daughter, not losing a son?" The next day, with Mitch on the sand dune, Melanie confesses that her mother abandoned her family, and that her infamous summer in Rome was a result of her "getting lost." The inference here is that Melanie's wild behavior is directly linked to a lack of maternal influence. When Mitch attempts to respond to her confession, she tearfully and enviously turns on him, "You know what a mother's love is." From this point on, Melanie strives to ingratiate herself to Lydia, in effect "trying out" the roles mother, older sister, and wife in the Brenner household. Finally, thrust into a catatonic state by the bird attack, Melanie regresses to what could be considered a pre-Oedipal state which finds the promise for recovery and a future in the arms of Lydia, who cradles her as they drive away from the bird-infested site of the "trauma."

In *Marnie* the desire for the love of the mother figure is overt. Marnie will kill, steal, lie, and cheat in an attempt to secure her mother's love. Marnie's salvation comes in the form of Sean Connery, who enforces his masculinity upon her in a way similar to the one in which Hitchcock forced his ideas of femininity upon Hedren. In what could be read as Hitchcock's own attempt at wish fulfillment, the ending of *Marnie* is not the reuniting of the "undifferentiated mother-daughter whole" which closes *The Birds*. After hearing and being forced to accept the truth about her mother's whoring, Marnie asserts that "I'm a cheat, a liar, and a thief, but I am decent," as though decency depended only on chastity and at the cost of the denial of "healthy" sexual instincts. Marnie is given no choice but to leave with Mark. She cannot stay with her mother. The maternal rejection leaves Marnie the option of jail or life as Mrs. Rutland.

What I would propose, in a consideration of these two films, is that Hitchcock, after creating a star much in the image of Grace Kelly, then denies that star the

romantic “happy ending” that occurs in all the Grace Kelly films. At the end of *Rear Window*, Lisa happily turns to a fashion magazine while her immobile and invalid boyfriend dozes; in *To Catch a Thief*, Francie finds Robie on the terrace of his country home, kisses him and tells him “mother will love it here.” *Dial M for Murder* does not end with a romantic reunion, but does close with the catching of the criminal, and the restoration of safety and the possibility of romance.

Hitchcock denies his “new Grace Kelly” happy endings because she denied him one. During the making of *Marnie*, Hitchcock’s obsessions overcame him and, according to Spoto, “Alone with Hedren in her trailer after the day’s work, he made an overt sexual proposition that she could neither ignore nor answer casually, as she could his previous gestures. There was no precedent in his life for such boldness — as there had been no precedent for the savage bird attack he had forced her to endure” (475). The result was a complete change of attitude about both his creations — *Marnie* and ‘Tippi’ Hedren. Truffaut calls *Marnie* Hitchcock’s “great flawed film” and identifies the desires barely contained within it: “If one accepts the concept that a perfect execution often conceals the filmmaker’s intentions, one must admit that the ‘great flawed film’ may reveal more vividly the picture’s *raison d’être*” (327). Here, Hitchcock’s *raison d’être* is present in and under the narrative. “In *Marnie*, the last picture to reveal Hitchcock’s deepest emotions, can there be any doubt that Sean Connery, in trying to control, dominate, and possess Tippi Hedren by investigating her past, finding her a job, and giving her money, is expressing Hitchcock’s own feelings as a frustrated Pygmalion?” (346). This frustration is evident throughout the ‘Tippi’ Hedren films and expresses itself in an incongruous and ambiguous conflation of the star, actor, and director, barely held in check by levels of artifice and a dark camp humor.

Otto Rank, writing on the nature of the art of cinematography says:

An obscure but unavoidable feeling takes hold of the spectator and seems to betray that deep human problems are being dealt with here. The uniqueness of cinematography in visibly portraying psychological events is [that it] calls our attention, with exaggerated clarity, to the fact that the interesting and meaningful problems of man’s relation to himself — and the fateful disturbance of this relation — find here an imaginative representation. (qtd. in Spoto 465)

This doubling effect of cinematography, which simultaneously represents the performance and the incongruous reality, contributes to a cinematic campiness. Truffaut hails one of Hitchcock’s great achievements as “inducing the public to identify with the attractive leading man, whereas Hitchcock himself almost always identified with the supporting role — the man who is cuckolded and disappointed, the killer or a monster, the man rejected by others, the man who has no right to

love, the man who looks on without being able to participate” (346-7). The roots of this Truffaut places in Hitch’s childhood “when, as an adolescent, he realized that his physique isolated him from others, Hitchcock withdrew from the world to view it with tremendous severity” (346). In recognizing his own incongruous desires, Hitchcock, like Charles Kennedy, “felt intuitively” the power of the camp to express humanity’s and his hidden desires. ✱

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Newton, originally writing in pre-Stonewall 1968, uses “homosexual” in the same way we might use “queer” today — although she is most definitely referring primarily to the gay male situation and strategies, since “lesbian camp” is a relatively new phenomenon.

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